United Nations A/C.5/67/SR.25

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
14 March 2013

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 25th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 8 March 2013, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Berger ..... (Germany)
Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Moon

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 144: Financing of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (*continued*) (A/67/696 and A/67/768)

1. **Mr. Huisman** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the construction of a new facility for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Arusha branch (A/67/696), said that the report was submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 66/240 A and B, and provided an update on the progress of the project since the Secretary-General's previous report (A/66/754). Considerable progress had been made: a suitable building site had been identified, the project team had concluded the conceptual design, a detailed cost estimate had been prepared and the overall project schedule had been reduced from five years and three months to four years, with a completion date at the end of 2015. The report also contained a proposal to utilize a multi-year special account, as had been done in the case of similar construction projects of the Secretariat.

2. The Mechanism had intensified its close cooperation with the Office of Central Support Services, which provided guidance and support on all aspects of the project's implementation, drawing on the experience and lessons learned from recent capital projects such as the capital master plan at Headquarters and the new office facilities in Addis Ababa and Nairobi. The General Assembly was requested to take note of the report and to authorize the use of a multi-year special account for the project.

3. **Mr. Moon** (Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/67/768), said that the Advisory Committee welcomed the shorter project schedule, which the General Assembly had called for in its resolution 66/240 B, and the savings achieved through the use of in-house capacity to develop the conceptual design.

4. The Advisory Committee had also examined issues common to most construction projects, such as contingency provisions in the cost estimate and associated costs. It reiterated that the contingency provisions served to provide safeguards against unforeseen cost overruns and that any cost overruns should first be met from compensatory reductions identified elsewhere through efficiency measures. With regard to associated costs, the Advisory Committee noted that potential costs for new furniture for the facility were not included in the current cost estimate. It therefore recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to include information regarding associated costs as part of overall costs in future construction and refurbishment proposals submitted to the Assembly. The Advisory Committee also recommended that the General Assembly should authorize the activities related to all phases of the project and approve an additional assessment of $1.5 million of the appropriation of $3 million for the construction of the facility, which remained to be assessed pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/240 B.

5. **Mr. Navoti** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached great importance to the timely implementation of construction and maintenance projects at all United Nations offices worldwide. It therefore appreciated the efforts made thus far in response to the General Assembly's requests, contained in its resolution 66/240 B, regarding the completion of the conceptual design, project plan and overall cost estimate of the project, and the shortening of the overall project schedule. However, the Secretary-General should continue to make every effort to reduce further the time needed to complete the construction, where feasible, while guaranteeing the effective oversight and quality of the project, based on the lessons learned from other construction projects such as the new office premises in Nairobi and Addis Ababa. The Group had been pleased to learn that the project had benefited from local expertise during the design phase, and joined the Advisory Committee in encouraging the continued inclusion of local knowledge and capacity in the project.

6. Recalling paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 66/240 B, he said that it was regrettable that the Secretary-General's report did not include information on the assessment of the remaining $1.5 million for 2013. That omission would have serious implications for the implementation of the mandate as approved by the General Assembly. While the Group was mindful that the Mechanism and the African Court of Justice and Human Rights would enjoy some economies of location by virtue of being

situated in the same area, it was concerned about the Advisory Committee's recommendation in paragraph 12 of its report, which could have a negative impact on the project's implementation owing to differences between the two entities' mandates. The Group would therefore study the details of that recommendation keenly.

7. In order to avoid project cost overruns, it was important that the project should be fully supported at the approved budget level and that the Fifth Committee should review the associated costs to ensure that the project was implemented on the basis of that budget level. The Group also supported the request that a multi-year special account should be utilized for the project. Lastly, the Group attached great importance to project accountability and oversight, and encouraged the Secretary-General to ensure that oversight mechanisms were in place in order to mitigate risks. The Secretary-General should also continue to provide Member States with regular updates on the project's implementation. Any change to the project mandate remained the sole prerogative of the Member States.

8. **Mr. Coffi** (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the effective and timely implementation of the project was of particular interest to the Group, which welcomed the steps taken to implement General Assembly resolutions 66/240 A and B, as well as the shortening of the project's time frame. The Secretary-General should continue his efforts in that regard to ensure that the project was completed on time and within the budget approved by the Assembly, without undermining the quality and scope of the project. The continued support of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, including the provision of land, was greatly appreciated, as the effective involvement of the host country would play a key role in the project's success. The Secretary-General should pursue his cooperation with the host country throughout the project's implementation.

9. The fact that the Secretary-General's report did not include information on the deferred assessment of $1.5 million was a matter of concern; the Group stressed that any mandate given by an intergovernmental body must be implemented. It also attached great importance to the oversight and effective management of the construction project, concurring with the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Office of Internal Oversight Services should be involved in overseeing the project. Updates on the recruitment of the project manager would be appreciated.

10. The project's revised budget was now estimated at $8.79 million, excluding associated costs. The Group was of the opinion that the Fifth Committee should recommend approval of the overall budget level to give the Secretary-General clear guidance on the resources available for the project. Should there be any cost variations, the Secretary-General should revert to the General Assembly in accordance with the established practice. Lastly, the Group supported the creation of a multi-year special account to facilitate project expenditures.

11. **Mr. Manongi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his Government was committed to supporting and facilitating the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Residual Mechanism, as well as other regional bodies, such as the East African Community and the African Court of Justice and Human Rights, located in Arusha. It would do its utmost to facilitate the implementation of the mandates of the Tribunal and the Mechanism and the speedy completion of the construction project. In that connection, it was essential that the project management team should work in close consultation with the host country.

12. He welcomed the progress made in implementing General Assembly resolutions 66/240 A and B and encouraged the Secretariat to make every effort to reduce further the time needed to complete the construction, where feasible, while guaranteeing the effective oversight, quality and scope of the project. He had similarly been pleased to note that the project had benefited from local expertise during the design phase, in keeping with best practices and lessons learned from other United Nations construction projects in the region, and encouraged the Secretariat to continue to take advantage of local knowledge in the Tanzanian construction sector.

13. He noted with concern that the Secretary-General's report did not specify the deferred action to be taken on the assessment in the amount of $1.5 million, and queried the rationale for that omission. He also noted the revised cost estimates, and stressed that the proposed budget level should be approved in order to enable the Secretary-General to take the necessary action on the various budget elements. Lastly, he welcomed the Advisory Committee's recommendation

on the need for continued oversight of the project, including by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, as oversight and accountability were essential for ensuring that the project was delivered efficiently and on time. His delegation looked forward to receiving information on the recruitment of the project manager.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.